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### BEFORE THE

# Hederal Communications Commission VII 1 1891

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20554

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In the Matter of	)				
Implementation of Sections	)	GN	Docket	No.	93-252
3(n) and 332 of the	Ś				
Communications Act,	j				
Regulatory Treatment of	j				
Mobile Services	j				

To: The Commission

# REPLY COMMENTS OF CELLCALL, INC.

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July 11, 1994

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### SUMMARY

CellCall, Inc. ("CellCall") hereby submits its reply to the Comments tendered in response to the <u>Further</u>

Notice of Proposed Rule Making in GN Docket No. 93-252,

Implementation of Sections 3(n) and 332 of the

Communications Act, Regulatory Treatment of Mobile Services.

CellCall is an owner and operator of specialized mobile radio ("SMR") systems and has requested Commission authorization to establish a wide-area enhanced SMR system using digital technology.

The Commission has tentatively concluded that the type of wide-area system that CellCall seeks to implement is substantially similar to cellular service. Therefore, the Commission must adopt rules that subject such systems to comparable regulatory treatment. In its Reply Comments, CellCall supports the adoption of a licensing plan whereby wide-area SMR systems are issued for contiguous channel blocks on an MTA basis. CellCall also supports elimination of loading requirements and the 40-mile rule, adoption of construction requirements comparable to other CMRS services, and rejection of the CMRS spectrum cap.

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The Commission To:

### REPLY COMMENTS OF CELLCALL, INC.

CellCall, Inc. ("CellCall"), by its attorneys, hereby replies to the Comments filed in response to the Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making (the "Further NPRM") in GN Docket No. 93-252, Implementation of Sections 3(n) and 332 of the Communications Act, Regulatory Treatment of Mobile Services, released May 20, 1994. In support hereof, the following is respectfully shown:

### I. Preliminary Statement

CellCall owns and operates both traditional and trunked specialized mobile radio ("SMR") stations throughout a three-state area in the midwestern United States and has applied for authorization to provide widearea enhanced SMR ("ESMR") service in this region. reply is limited to issues affecting the SMR service that were raised in the Further NPRM and commented upon in the

initial comments directed thereto, with particular emphasis on the technical, operational, and licensing rules applicable to wide-area SMR service.

- 2. As the Commission is aware, the SMR industry has in recent years undergone a great deal of geographic market expansion through licensing, management agreements, and corporate consolidation. In the process, certain licensees have expressed an interest in aggregating large channel blocks and using advanced technologies to increase system capacity, thereby enabling wide geographic areas to be served efficiently. These SMR operators on occasion have requested waivers of various Commission rules to permit them to construct advanced spectrally-efficient ESMR systems that would increase system capacity and permit wide-area roaming. The Commission also has adopted rules that expressly authorize extended implementation periods for such operators.
- 3. In the <u>Second Report and Order</u> in this docket, the Commission determined that wide-area SMR service should be reclassified as a Commercial Mobile Radio Service ("CMRS").<sup>3</sup> Having made this determination, the Commission

The first of these waivers was granted to Nextel Communications (formerly Fleet Call, Inc.). See Fleet Call, Inc., 6 FCC Rcd. 1533 (1991).

<sup>&</sup>lt;u>See</u> 47 C.F.R. § 90.629.

Implementation of Sections 3(n) and 332 of the Communications Act, Regulatory Treatment of Mobile Services, 9 FCC Rcd. 1411 (1994).

has a statutory obligation to ensure that reclassified private land mobile licensees, including SMR licensees, "are subject to technical requirements that apply to licensees that are providers of substantially similar common carrier services."

4. In the <u>Further NPRM</u>, the Commission proposed to determine whether services are substantially similar based "primarily on whether the CMRS providers in question compete to meet similar customer demands for service." The Commission tentatively concluded that wide-area SMR service is substantially similar to common carrier cellular service. However, the Commission also acknowledged that many of its rules governing 800 MHz SMRs impose burdens that do not exist for cellular carriers. These rules, which generally act as an impediment to the ability of CellCall and other wide-area SMR providers to compete with CMRS, must be changed if the Commission's determination that wide-area SMR and cellular service compete to provide similar service to customers is to have any validity.

<sup>47</sup> U.S.C. § 332(d)(3) (1993).

Further NPRM at para. 5.

 $<sup>\</sup>underline{i}$  Id. at para. 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;u>See</u>, <u>e.g.</u>, <u>Further NPRM</u> at paras. 26-27 (discussion of channel assignments and service areas); 71 (discussion of loading requirements); 72 (discussion of the 40-mile rule).

### II. The Commission Must Adopt Technical and Operational Rules for 800 MHz SMR Licensees that Are Comparable to Rules for Other CMRS Providers

5. As noted, the Commission has acknowledged that its present 800 MHz SMR technical, operational, and licensing rules subject wide-area SMR carriers to different regulatory treatment than other CMRS providers.

Consequently, to the extent that wide-area operators provide a service that is substantially similar to other CMRS offerings, these rules must be changed.

### A. Wide-Area SMR Licensing

technical rules concern channel assignment and service area. Consequently, the Commission requested comment on what rules should be adopted to ensure that the licensing of 800 MHz wide-area SMRs is consistent with the statutory goal of achieving comparable technical rules for substantially similar services. The Further NPRM set out two alternatives for licensing wide-area SMRs: a defined service area based on the Rand-McNally Major Trading Areas ("MTA"), and a self-defined service area based on licensees' and applicants' self-designation of geographic coverage areas.

<sup>§</sup> See Further NPRM at para. 32.

 $<sup>\</sup>frac{9}{}$  See id. at paras. 32-33.

- 7. The Comments express broad support for licensing wide-area SMRs on a defined service area basis. 10 However, no consensus on the details of such a plan emerged from the various Comments that addressed this issue. 11 Nonetheless, several parties, all of whom will be directly affected by any such change, as will CellCall, indicated a willingness to work with other affected industry members to devise a comprehensive wide-area 800 MHz licensing plan. 12
- 8. Since initial comments on the <u>Further NPRM</u> were filed, CellCall and other members of AMTA's Digital Switched Network Council, which represents the interests of numerous wide-area SMR system operators, many of whom are active participants in this proceeding, have reached consensus on a plan for licensing wide-area 800 MHz SMRs. Under this plan, a licensee would be authorized to provide service on an MTA basis utilizing a contiguous band of spectrum.

See Comments of American Mobile Telecommunications
Association ("AMTA") at 15; Nextel Communications, Inc.
("Nextel") at 14-15; OneComm Corporation ("OneComm") at 5; Pittencrief Communications, Inc. ("Pittencrief") at 6. Indeed, the Commission already has a substantial record on which to base a finding that MTAs are the optimal service areas for wide-area SMRs. See Comments in PR Docket No. 93-144, Amendment of Part 90 of the Commission's Rules to Facilitate Future Development of SMR Systems in the 800 MHz Frequency Band.

See, e.g., Comments of Nextel at 6-21; OneComm at 3-7; Dial Page, Inc. ("Dial Page") at 7; Pittencrief at 5-8; AMTA at 14-16.

See Comments of AMTA at 15-16; OneComm at 7; Dial Page at 7.

9. The first key component of this plan calls for a defined service area. The plan adopts the alternative originally proposed in the Commission's 800 MHz EMSP

Notice<sup>13</sup> and restated in the Further NPRM. <sup>14</sup> A single widearea 800 MHz SMR system license would be granted for each

MTA. Eligibility to hold the license would be limited to
those entities who satisfy the Commission's standards for
receiving authorization to establish a wide-area system and
who are (1) a wide-area 800 MHz SMR licensee currently
authorized to operate within that MTA and/or (2) a wide-area
800 MHz SMR applicant whose application to serve any area
within the MTA is pending as of August 10, 1994. <sup>15</sup> For any
MTA in which this eligibility threshold entitles more than
one entity to hold the license, all such eligible parties

Notice of Proposed Rule Making, Amendment of Part 90 of the Commission's Rules to Facilitate Future Development of SMR Systems in the 800 MHz Frequency Band, 8 FCC Rcd. 3950 (1993), para. 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;u>Further NPRM</u> at para. 31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;u>15</u>/ Establishing a date-certain will enable Commission staff to speed processing of pending wide-area filings, and also will protect against the possibility that the Commission would be flooded with new requests for widearea authorizations. As the Commission acknowledged in the Further NPRM, "the 800 MHz band [has] become heavily occupied in virtually all major markets and in many secondary markets and rural areas as well." Further NPRM at para. 32. Thus, establishing a cut-off date of August 11, 1994 for filing wide-area SMR applications should not prejudice any party. To discourage speculative filings, however, applicants filing between July 11, 1994 and August 10, 1994, should be required to include a significant minimum number of discrete channels in order to be granted a wide-area authorization.

would be free to negotiate the terms and conditions pursuant to which a single entity ultimately would receive the MTA license. In the absence of such an agreement, the Commission's existing rules governing wide-area SMR systems would apply. 16

10. Without a clear block of contiguous spectrum, wide-area SMR operators cannot be considered to be competing with cellular carriers. Thus, the second key component of the 800 MHz wide-area licensing plan provides that, once granted, the MTA license would authorize the exclusive use of a contiguous block of 200 channels that are presently allocated to the SMR service. Traditional SMR systems operating on these channels would be subject to mandatory

According to Nextel, "it is highly doubtful that any market can economically support more than one ESMR, particularly given the onset of digital cellular, the creation of PCS, and the coming implementation of satellite-based wireless telecommunications systems. By and large, firms pursuing the ESMR initiative unilaterally have established distinct, non-overlapping service areas. Accordingly, in most areas of the country the assignment of ESMR spectrum blocks will be a non-issue for the Commission." Comments of Nextel at 16.

The 800 MHz private land mobile spectrum is divided into 600 25 kHz channels in the 806-821/851-866 MHz bands. Of these 600 channels, 280 are available for trunked SMR systems, including the 200 contiguous SMR Category channels from 401-600 that would be authorized under an MTA license. The remaining 80 SMR channels are interspersed between channels 151-400. The General Category channels from 1-150 are available to SMR systems under certain conditions. See 47 C.F.R. §§ 90.613, 90.615.

relocation to channels 1-400. The MTA licensee would be responsible for all expenses associated with the relocation.

means toward achieving substantial similarity between the channel assignment and service area rules for wide-area SMR service and other wide-area CMRS, and toward eliminating the severe backlog in processing filings for wide-area SMR authorizations presently pending before the Private Radio Bureau. In this regard, CellCall agrees with AMTA that the potential of wide-area SMRs to provide service that is substantially similar to cellular service can be realized only if the Commission modifies its regulatory structure to provide for the major aspects of this plan — defined service areas and clear contiguous spectrum. 18

### B. Loading Standards Should Be Eliminated

12. As outlined in the <u>Further NPRM</u>, wide-area SMR licensees must meet loading requirements in order to obtain exclusive channel use, to obtain additional channels, to serve areas within 40 miles of existing stations, and to avoid automatic cancellation of unloaded channels after five years. <sup>19</sup> In the <u>Further NPRM</u>, the Commission acknowledged that similar restrictions are not imposed on either cellular

 $<sup>\</sup>underline{18}$  See Comments of AMTA at i.

Further NPRM at para. 68 (citing 47 C.F.R. §§ 90.631(a), 90.631(c), 90.627(b), 90.631(b)).

carriers or PCS providers.<sup>20</sup> The Commission therefore proposed to eliminate loading requirements for wide-area SMR systems.<sup>21</sup>

elimination of loading requirements. CellCall agrees.
CellCall intends to convert constructed analog systems into a wide-area system employing spectrally efficient advanced digital technologies. Loading requirements produce a result completely at odds with this goal, by forcing wide-area SMR operators wishing to implement efficient digital technology to first load their systems with less efficient analog units that would then be deloaded as the digital conversion takes place. Moreover, the requirements unfairly burden operators who provide interconnected service to customers.

Interconnected communications typically are longer than noninterconnected communications, and operators thus must limit the number of customers to whom they provide interconnected service in order to satisfy the loading rules.

14. CellCall also supports the Commission's proposal to eliminate Section 90.627(b) of the Commission's rules, 23 the "40-mile rule," which generally prohibits a

<sup>10.0</sup> Id. at paras. 68, 71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;u>11.</u> <u>1d.</u> at para. 70.

See, e.g., Comments of AMTA at 12; Pittencrief at 11-12; Nextel at 20; E.F. Johnson at 17-18; Geotek at 21; Brown and Schwaninger at 13.

Further NPRM at para. 72.

trunked SMR licensee from receiving authorization for another trunked station within 40 miles of the existing station unless loading requirements are satisfied. Elimination of this rule will permit wide-area SMR operators to complete acquisitions without regard to the 40-mile rule and to construct systems in a small cell configuration utilizing advanced switching techniques and frequency reuse in order to provide high quality service that has the potential to be competitive with other CMRS.

15. In sum, CellCall agrees with AMTA that the competitive disadvantages of loading requirements far outweigh the benefits they previously offered. As the Commission has properly recognized, the primary concern behind the loading requirement, spectrum warehousing, can be addressed through other means such as construction timetables and coverage requirements. 25

### C. System Construction and Operation

16. In the <u>Further NPRM</u> the Commission properly found that "requiring wide-area SMR licensees to

 $<sup>\</sup>underline{\underline{24}}$  See Comments of AMTA at 12.

Further NPRM at para. 72. As Nextel notes, "establishing an ESMR block license would permit the Commission to eliminate the 40-mile rule and loading requirements for ESMR systems. This ensures ESMRs comparable regulation with cellular. In a blocked channel, geographic service environment, spectrum warehousing would no longer be an issue thus eliminating the need for the 40-mile rule." Comments of Nextel at 20.

affirmatively justify their construction timetables in order to obtain an extended implementation period constitutes a burden that is not imposed on cellular and PCS licensees," and requested comment on whether a fixed construction period should be adopted.<sup>26</sup>

is adequate for traditional SMR stations, amendment of the construction requirements for ESMR systems is justified.

The purpose, size, and complexity of such wide-area systems requires longer than one year to plan, approve, construct, and place in operation. Consequently, CellCall supports Pittencrief's proposal that the Commission adopt rules similar to those for cellular service, and permit wide-area SMR operators five years to construct their systems within an MTA. Areas that remain unserved after five years would be relicensed. CellCall also supports the suggestion by Nextel that the Commission eliminate the requirement that licensees obtain prior approval for every system modification within the service area. Requirement that modification within the service area.

### III. The Commission Should Not Adopt A CMRS Spectrum Cap

18. In the <u>Further NPRM</u>, the Commission tentatively adopted a 40 MHz limit on the amount of spectrum

 $<sup>\</sup>frac{26}{}$  Further NPRM at paras. 64-65.

See Comments of Pittencrief at 11.

 $<sup>\</sup>frac{28}{}$  See Comments of Nextel at 20.

a single CMRS provider may hold within a given geographic service area. The Comments overwhelmingly oppose such a cap. Indeed, nearly every commenter addressing this issue, from all segments of the communications industry, generally rejected the Commission's reasoning that such a cap is necessary to prevent the accumulation of excessive market power. CellCall agrees with the comments that oppose the application of a spectrum cap to the 800 MHz SMR frequencies, and urges the Commission not to adopt the proposed cap.

<sup>&</sup>lt;u>Further NPRM</u> at para. 93.

See, e.g., Comments of AMTA at 28-34; OneComm at 7-14.

See also Comments of Air Spectrum III, Inc.; Celpage,
Inc.; Century Cellunet, Inc.; Constellation
Communications, Inc.; CTIA; Comcast Corporation; Dial
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Paging Network, Inc.; Pittencrief; Ram Mobile Data USA,
L.P.; Roseville Telephone; Rural Cellular Association;
SMR Systems, Inc.; Southwestern Bell Corporation; TRW,
Inc.

### IV. Conclusion

WHEREFORE, the foregoing premises duly considered, CellCall requests that the Commission adopt rules in this proceeding consistent with the foregoing.

Respectfully submitted,

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July 11, 1994

### **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I, Tana Christine Maples, hereby certify that I have this 11th day of July,

1994, caused copies of the foregoing Reply Comments of CellCall, Inc. to be delivered by hand, courier charges prepaid, and by first class mail, postage prepaid, to the following:

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### **Utilities Telecommunications**

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### Vanguard Cellular Systems,

### Inc.

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### **WJG Maritel Corporation**

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